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Amendment to the Claims

Claims 1 - 5. (Cancelled)

6. (Previously presented): A method of preparing a foodstuff for browning in a microwave oven, the method comprising providing a browning composition comprising a sugar acid having at least two carbonyl groups as a browning agent in an amount sufficient to effect browning; and incorporating said browning composition in a foodstuff.

7. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein said step of incorporating said browning composition in a foodstuff includes the step of topically applying said browning composition to the foodstuff.

8. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein said step of incorporating said browning compositions in a foodstuff includes the step of mixing said browning composition into said foodstuff.

9. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein said foodstuff is selected from the group consisting of turkey, sausage casings, chicken, biscuits, pizza, pie covering and hash brown potatoes.

Claims 10 – 14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously presented): The method according to claim 6 further comprising adding an amine source to the browning composition.

16. (Previously presented): The method according to claim 15, wherein the amine source is an amino acid or combination of amino acids.

17. (Previously presented): A browning composition for application to a foodstuff comprising 2, 5 diketo-gluconic acid as a browning agent in an amount sufficient to effect browning and an amine source.

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18. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the amine source is an amino acid or combination of amino acids.

19. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the foodstuff is a meat product or meat by-product.

20. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the foodstuff is a dairy product.

21. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the foodstuff is a baked good.

22. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the foodstuff is a starch and carbohydrate product.

23. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the foodstuff is a vegetable product.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein the amount of browning agent is from 0.001% to 40% by weight of the foodstuff.

26. (Previously presented): The method of claim 15, wherein the browning agent is a gluconic acid derivative and the concentration of the browning agent in the browning composition is 0.01mM to 500 mM.

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein said browning composition is an aqueous solution.

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29. (Previously presented): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein said browning composition is an aqueous solution.

30. (Cancelled)

31. (Previously presented): The method of claim 6, wherein said browning composition is a dry mixture.

32. (New): The method according to claim 6, wherein the sugar acid is a hexose sugar acid substituted compound having between two and four carbonyl groups.

33. (New): The method according to claim 32, wherein the hexose sugar acid is a gluconic acid derivative.

34. (New): The method according to claim 33, wherein the gluconic acid derivative is 2-keto-L-gulonic acid (2KLG), 2-keto-D-gluconic acid (2KDG), 5-keto-L-gluconic acid (5KLG) or 5-keto-D-gluconic acid (5KDG).

35. (New): The method according to claim 6, wherein the sugar acid is 2, 5 diketo-gluconic acid.

36. (New): The method according to claim 6, wherein the sugar acid has three carbonyl groups.

37. (New): The method according to claim 15, wherein the amino acid is lysine, arginine, histidine or combinations thereof.

38. (New): The browning composition of claim 17, wherein the concentration of the browning agent is between 0.01mM and 500 mM.